

Nevada State Veterans Home
100 Veterans Memorial Drive
Boulder City, Nevada 89005
(702) 332-6784 • Fax (702) 332-6762

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



Department of Veterans Services
6900 N. Pecos Road, Room 1C237
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89086
(702) 224-6025 • Fax (702) 224-6927

Northern Nevada
Veterans Memorial Cemetery
P.O. Box 1919
Fernley, Nevada 89408
(775) 575-4441 • Fax (775) 575-5713

STATE OF NEVADA
**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS SERVICES**
5460 Reno Corporate Drive, Suite 131
Reno, Nevada 89511
(775) 688-1653 • Fax (775) 688-1656

Southern Nevada
Veterans Memorial Cemetery
1900 Veterans Memorial Drive
Boulder City, Nevada 89005
(702) 486-5920 • Fax (702) 486-5923

Minutes

Name of Organization: **Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC)**

Date and Time of Meeting: **May 6, 2015 (9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)**

Meeting Location: **VIA Video & Teleconference with Public Access**

Members of the public were able to participate in person at the Veterans Benefits Administration Building, 5460 Reno Corporate Dr. Reno, NV 89511 or the VBA conference room 6900 N. Pecos Rd. N. Las Vegas, NV 89086

*Call to Order

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Davis calls meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Chairman Davis:

ROLL CALL: Chairman Davis calls roll for official members.

Members present include: Anne Davis, Roberta Pike-Oates, and Charley Smith.

Members absent: Anthoneal Newman

Non-council members: present during Roll Call include: Willette Gerald, Carol Simenson and Necole Stevens.

Members of the public in attendance: Laurretta Nawrowski and Tracy Soliday.

Motion to approve previous minutes: N/A

PUBLIC COMMENT: Deputy Director Gerald addresses public meeting rules, stating when replying to messages do not "reply to all" unless it is necessary that all parties be included. When the public is not present you cannot have a

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discussion regarding a voting issue. When the public brings an issue to the committee, members of the committee cannot engage the public however the committee can address the issue by voting to add the item to the next meeting agenda for vote to ensure that the proper research has been performed.

Deputy Director Gerald will send the public meeting presentation to all the WVAC members for further clarification.

The presentation will be included in the meeting notes.

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

CHANGES TO AGENDA:

1. Director Kat Miller is unable to attend this meeting due to other engagements. Deputy Director Gerald relays that the program changes and updates submitted for the Governor's budget have not received formal approval but these changes will most likely be approved.
2. Attorney General Henna Rasul will not be able to make this meeting but the Deputy Director has a presentation from her department to utilize for current and future meetings.
3. Addresses previous meetings and agendas from January and March.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1) Anthoneal Newman has relocated and is no longer participating member in the WVAC. Anne Davis will reach out to Anthoneal Newman via email to confirm her departure. The NDVS Women Veteran Coordinator has started the search for a replacement member for the WVAC to represent veterans in Elko or other rural area.
- 2) Lucia Garces is no longer the Women Veteran Program Coordinator at the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System and a replacement has not been named. However, the Acting Director Lisa Howell of the VA Hospital in Reno offered Dr. Robert Kimmel or Dr. Amy Sanguinetti as a resource for the committee until said person is named. The replacement should become an advisory member of the WVAC.
- 3) The NDVS Women Veteran Coordinator is working with Gina Hemma in Salt Lake City to arrange an event in November, "Fatigues to Fabulous". The trip is designed to take women veterans in Elko and transport them to Salt Lake City for a women veteran event.

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- 4) Deputy Director Gerald attended the Women Veterans Conference in Texas a few weeks ago. The conference offered information and resources as well as shared best practices. The Deputy Director discussed:
 - a) Challenges of reaching and identifying women veterans.
 - b) The best times to host an event.
 - c) What the event provides i.e. health programs, homelessness, financial planning, etc.
 - d) How to get a full time Women Veteran Coordinator.
- 5) The NDVS Women Veteran Coordinator will represent the state at the next Women Health Event at the VA Hospital in North Las Vegas on May 14, 2015. (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) Women Veterans of Nevada (WVON) will attend.
- 6) The Women Veteran Coordinator will use the current sign up form for current events.
- 7) Necole Stevens, Women Veteran Coordinator has modified the Facebook page, and created a Google+ page, and Twitter page. The creation of an Instagram account will be completed before the week is finished.
- 8) The Women Veteran Coordinator will also add articles to the newsletter.
 - a) Include a bio and contact information.
 - b) Events for women veterans.
 - c) Communicate with other veteran newsletters and include NDVS information to expand the program.
 - d) The WVAC offers support to the Women Veteran Coordinator for rural outreach.
- 9) Necole Stevens invited to be a part of the Women Health Care committee in the VA.
- 10) Anne Davis suggests a motion to review the previous agendas and minutes from January and March.
 - a) Bobi Oates makes the motion.
 - b) Charley Smith seconds.
 - c) Motion passes.
- 11) Agenda item added – Minutes reviews
- 12) January 7, 2015 Meeting Minutes need to incorporate the following changes:
 - a) Add more details to minutes.
 - b) Add Dr. Brilliant's comments in January's minutes.
 - c) Charley's name should be consistent throughout all meeting minutes.
 - d) Correct the spelling of Shelly's name to: Shellie Severa.

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- e) Add the public comment to agenda and minutes
 - f) Connect with previous WVC for information on the meeting in January.
- 13) March 4, 2015 minutes were never approved.
- a) Terina Caserto from UNR
 - b) Update these minutes and resubmit for approval. (These tasks are assigned to Necole Stevens).
- 14) March 24, 2015 minutes were never approved.
- a) Change the spelling of Bobi Oates's name.
- 15) Motion to approve March 24, 2015 minutes with the change of spelling, by Anne Davis.
- a) Charley Smith seconds.
 - b) Motion approved.
- 16) Next order of business is: Finalizing Report to Governor Sandoval.
- a) Chairwoman makes motion.
 - b) Charley Smith seconded.
 - c) Motion Approved.

Review of Recommendations:

1. Recommend that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services Women Veteran Program Coordinator be established as a full time position. It is currently staffed as a part-time function.
 - a. Recommended change: A Women Veteran Coordinator hired full time, effective March 16, 2015. Leave on the agenda but specify this goal as being met.
2. Recommend that the Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) be codified in statute as a sub-committee of the Veterans Services Committee (VSC). We suggest that the WVAC consist of a minimum of seven members, two of which represent women veterans from rural and frontier areas across the state. A member of the WVAC, as selected by the WVAC Chair, would serve on the Nevada Veterans Services Commission.
 - a. Recommended change: Keep as is.
3. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services continue efforts to develop a Veterans Information System to identify where veterans are located throughout the state so that veterans (to include women veterans) are informed about benefits and opportunities that they may be eligible for.
 - a. Recommended change: Keep as is.

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4. Recommend that State of Nevada agencies who collect veteran data add the data collection question, "Have you ever served in the United States Military?" to their forms/applications (during the next programmed update) in place of the question "Are you a veteran?" Studies have shown that many women veterans do not self identify as a veteran and asking if they have served will help ensure that their status as a veteran is identified.
 - a. Specify: What is a women veteran? Who is a veteran? This needs to be defined and placed on the NDVS site. (WVAC will revisit this topic).
 - b. Recommended change: Keep as is.
5. Recommend that the Governor encourage US Department of Veterans Affairs and State of Nevada initiatives to provide or expand tele-health programs for Women Veterans in rural areas.
 - a. Recommended change: Keep as is.
6. Recommend that the Governor communicate to the US Department of Veterans Affairs the need for a full time Obstetrician/Gynecologist at the Southern Nevada Veterans Medical Center so that women veterans' needs are met.
 - a. Leave on the agenda but specify this goal as being met.
 - b. A Gynecologist was hired and works in the Women Health Center.
 - i. Carol Simenson will supply the WVAC with hire date.
 - c. Recommended change: Keep as is.
7. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a white paper in collaboration with the Women Veterans Advisory Committee that informs legislators and State Agencies of facts regarding Nevada's Women Veterans, to include demographics, their contributions to National and State security, and unique needs of this population. This information may help reduce misinformation and improve women veteran programming support.
 - a. Recommended change: Keep as is.
8. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a women veterans training module to be included in the training for Nevada Veterans Advocates and the Nevada Veterans Service Officers.
 - a. NDVS is still working on tests. Process is still in the developmental stage.
 - b. Recommended change: Keep as is.

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9. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a Strategic Communications Plan that includes how to reach women veterans throughout the state.

- a. Recommended change: Keep as is.

10. The Women Veteran Advisory Committee endorses the efforts of the Nevada System of Higher Education in developing Veterans support programs and on-campus Veterans Support Centers in Nevada to support Nevada Veterans.

- a. Recommended change: Keep as is.

17) Possible Recommendations for the WVAC Final report.

Recommendation #1

As of September 30, 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimated the female veteran population within the state of Nevada to be 21,362. To date, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) has identified approximately 2,500 female veterans or only 11.7% of the estimated total. This indicates that Nevada could do a better job of identifying and recognizing its female Veteran population.

To do this, the Nevada Governor should provide funding and direct the NDVS to conduct a campaign to identify women veterans through a message that could be distributed through a variety of means. The recommended message is as follows: Attention women in the State of Nevada: If you have ever served in the military, you may be eligible for benefits. Please call 123-456-7890 or go to this website <http://www.veterans.nv.gov/> to get further information. NDVS should establish a telephone line/number solely for the purpose of reaching women veterans. This telephone line should have voicemail with a message established telling the caller to leave their name and phone number so that they can be contacted. The NDVS Women Program Coordinator would then be responsible for returning the phone calls. All reasonable means should be used to publicize this message. The most effective and least costly should be the first means to publicize this message. One of the best ways to reach veterans is through the state veterans organizations' newsletters. The second means to be used should be a public service announcement via radio and television. Once a phone line has been established, NDVS should then contact each veteran organization and request they publish the message in their upcoming newsletters. Other possible means of distributing the message include the Chamber of Commerce, women networking organizations, local newspapers, and television stations. Every effort should be made to reach the rural and frontier communities.

(Recap)

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- a. Make sure "feel good" stories are included on the social media outlets, newsletters and online.
- b. Use the hashtag: #vetslikeher.
- c. Be mindful of saying "veteran issues. Not everyone views their experience as a problem or an issue
- d. Motion to include this recommendation.
- e. Bobi Oates seconds the motion.
- f. Motion Approved.

Recommendation #2

On October 8, 2014, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs directed all Veterans Affairs healthcare and benefits facilities to continue to hold quarterly town hall events to improve communication with, and hear directly from, Veterans nationwide. Evidence indicates that these town halls have not been widely publicized so that Veterans are not aware of the meetings. Recommend the Nevada Governor direct the Nevada Veterans healthcare and benefits facilities to use all means possible to publicize these town hall events so that every Veteran is aware of this opportunity. These organizations should be directed to publish summaries of these meetings on their websites to ensure the information is passed on to Veterans who were unable to attend the meetings.

- a. Fewer veterans attend the meetings.
- b. One or two people often disrupt the meetings.
- c. Seating arrangement concerns.
- d. Motion to include this recommendation.
- e. Bobi Oates seconds the motion.
- f. Motion Approved.

Recommendation #3

To support women veterans' academic goals, NDVS should determine if there are any scholarships targeted at women veterans through veteran organizations. If there are none available, work with veteran organizations to establish. If scholarships for women veterans are available, publicize this information on the NDVS website.

- a. We need to find a program that is geared towards women. Most programs are not gender specific. Some even assist the children of veterans but not women in general.
- b. Motion to include this recommendation.
- c. Bobi Oates seconds the motion.
- d. Motion Approved.

Recommendation #4

The Green Zone Network ~~Initiative~~ should be a one-stop shop for veterans seeking employment assistance. Additional staffing is needed for the Green

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Zone Initiative to assist with the employee side of the employment assistance. This should include connecting veterans with organizations that can provide assistance with writing resumes and translating military skills to civilian jobs. While the Green Zone Network website allows employers to post job opportunities, an additional staff member could reach out to other potential employers to expand the opportunities available.

- a. It is not the Green Zone Initiative, Green Zone Network.
- b. The Green Zone Network name may change over time.
- c. The website should be designed to be more engaging and inviting to women veterans.
- d. Motion to include this recommendation.
- e. Bobi Oates seconds the motion.
- f. Motion Approved.

Recommendation #5

The Nevada Department of Veteran Services should be directed to add a definition of who a Veteran is to the homepage for their website. Committee members have come across numerous Veterans (both men and women) who do not think they are a Veteran. Veterans in the state must be educated on who is a Veteran.

Recommendation #6

Currently there is no requirement for veterans to identify themselves as a veteran when applying for unemployment benefits. NDVS should investigate whether a question can be added to the application to ask: Have you ever served in the military? If respondents reply yes, then they should be connected with training and employment services available to veterans.

- a. The unemployment system has the largest data collection on residents and there should be a way to integrate or find a way to get data from them.
- b. The problem may be funding, or may need to be approved on a Federal level.
- c. When a person requests training or unemployment benefits the form should include their veteran status.
- d. There are obstacles in obtaining data from the DMV and other governmental agencies.
- e. Should the question be modified to say, "Have you ever served in the National Guard, Army, etc.?"
- f. The NDVS website should have "What makes you a veteran?" This needs to be redefined.
- g. This recommendation was approved with revisions discussed.

Recommendation #7

Direct the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to post feel good

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stories regarding Women Veterans on their website as well as other social media outlets to publicize, recognize, and raise awareness about the good things Women Veterans are doing.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Contact and work with Necole Stevens on final reports and minutes.
2. Contact Anthoneal Newman to see if she is still a member.
3. Find out whether a veteran can enroll in the VFW.
4. Find out the status/future of the WVAC and if the committee will remain functional new members will need to be added. There are areas that are not properly represented:
 - o Elko
 - o Younger Female Veteran

NEXT MEETING:

- Pending legislative or departmental approval.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None

ADJOURNMENT:

- Chairman Davis made a motion to adjourn.
- Bobi Oates seconded.
- Meeting adjourned at 10:18 a.m.